

# Public Service Pensioners' Council

Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BD. Telephone: 020 7380 4765 FAX: 020 7383 3454  
www.publicservicepensioners.org.uk

To: Secretaries of Constituent Organisations

20<sup>th</sup> November 2013

Dear Colleagues

## **PSPC CAMPAIGNS UPDATE – NOVEMBER 2013**

I am taking this opportunity to update constituent organisations on some important issues.

### **Pensions Bill**

The Pensions Bill has passed its Commons stages and is now set for its Second Reading in the House of Lords on 3 December.

The major provisions of the Bill are still intact, including the single-tier pension which means in practice that a two-tier pension system could emerge. The Bill means that existing pensioners and those who reach State Pension age before 6 April 2016 who have a pension less than the full single tier pension amount would remain on a much lower pension indefinitely.

The PSPC is operating jointly with Age UK, Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance, National Federation of Occupational Pensioners, National Pensioners' Convention and the Occupational Pensioners' Alliance. Letters have been sent to Lord Freud for the Government and Baroness Sherlock for the Opposition outlining our joint key concerns which are as follows:

- Protection for current and future pensions by including the triple lock guarantee in the Bill. For current pensioners both the basic and additional pension need to be linked to the triple lock to prevent any gaps between entitlements growing.
- Ensuring that the Bill contains specific commitments to the introduction of a single tier Pension that is set at a level significantly above the means test.
- Clarifying the position around passported benefits, including Housing Benefit and Council Tax support, and ensuring that people do not lose vital additional help due to the introduction of the single tier pension.
- Introducing a 15-year transitional period for the derived benefits of those relying on a partner's contributions including widows and widowers.

We have also called for an early review to examine how all pensioners could be brought into the single tier pension on a no detriment basis with current entitlements secured. Constituent organisations that wish to make representations on the Pensions Bill should do so with all possible speed.

### **Universal benefits e-petition**

This is a reminder to publicise the NPC e-petition calling for the retention of universal pensioner benefits. It is important to be proactive on this issue, as demonstrating the strength of feeling now will be more effective than attempting to fight proposals to tax or means-test universal benefits after the General Election.

**General Secretary: ANDREW MORRIS**

ASSOCIATIONS REPRESENTED: Association of HM Inspectors of Schools OFSTED Section Committee • Association of HM Inspectors of Schools (Scotland) • Association of Local Authority Chief Executives • Association of Teachers and Lecturers • Association of School and College Leaders • British Broadcasting Corporation Pensioners Association • Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance • Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance (Scotland) • Educational Institute of Scotland • Forces Pension Society • Foreign and Commonwealth Office Association • GMB • MDP Retired Officers' Association • National Association of Head Teachers • National Association of Retired Firefighters • National Association of Retired Police Officers • National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers • National Federation of Occupational Pensioners • National Union of Teachers • Overseas Service Pensioners' Association • Prospect • Public and Commercial Services Union • Retired Police Officers' Association (Scotland) • Retired Prison Governors Association • Retired Teachers' Association (Northern Ireland) • Scottish Retired Teachers' Association • UNISON • University and College Union

The e-petition can be found at <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/49599> and currently has 22,500 signatures. I would urge constituent organisations to circulate this to your membership and encourage members to sign. The NPC is also holding a Lobby of Parliament on 27 November covering this and other relevant issues including the single tier pension. A flyer is available on the PSPC website [www.publicservicepensioners.org.uk](http://www.publicservicepensioners.org.uk).

### **Public Service Pensions Increase 2014**

Colleagues will be aware that the April public service pensions increase is based on the inflation increase for the preceding September. Since April 2011, the increase has been based on the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) rather than the Retail Prices Index (RPI).

The CPI increase in September was 2.7 per cent, compared to a 3.2 per cent increase in RPI. The public service pensions increase for April 2014 will be confirmed by a Treasury order in early 2014.

### **Lobbying Bill Update**

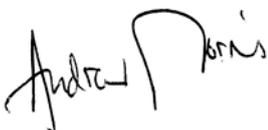
The Government has thankfully agreed to a pause in Part 2 of The Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Bill, which deals with regulation of non-party campaigning during a General Election period. It will next be debated on 16 December.

The Bill would introduce much tighter regulation of third-party campaigners in the year before elections. The Government intends to bring these changes into effect from 23 May 2014 directly after the European Elections.

- Regulations will cover a wider range of activities carried out for “election purposes”. The controls will now cover spending on events, media work, polling, transport, and documents discussing policies associated with political parties, including the staff costs of all these activities, as well as election material distributed to the public.
- Organisations spending more than £5k in England, and £2k in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland on these activities in the year prior to a UK general election will need to register with the Electoral Commission.
- The spending limits on campaigning by registered campaigners in the year before the election will be reduced by 60 per cent – 70 per cent for example:
  - from £793K to £320K in England
  - from £60K to £24K in Wales
- There will also be a new sub-limit on spending focused in particular constituencies.

This Bill could have a chilling impact on the third sector, in particular trade unions, in the year leading up to a General Election, minimising debate and scrutiny. Although the Government has agreed to a pause in the legislative timetable, there is no guarantee that the progress of Part 2 will not be restarted in something near its current form. I enclose a briefing from the Civil Service Pensioners’ Alliance to illustrate the impact of this potentially dangerous legislation.

Yours sincerely



ANDREW MORRIS  
General Secretary